

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

Claim 1 (previously presented): 1. A case-ready package for containing a food product which exudes juice, comprising:

(A) a support member;

(B) a lid member comprising a flexible film; and

(C) an absorbent pad comprising:

(i) an upper web comprising a flexible film;

(ii) a liquid-permeable lower web comprising nonwoven fiber having a hydrophilic composition thereon, the nonwoven fiber comprising at least one member selected from the group consisting of polyolefin, polyamide, and polyester; and

(iii) an absorbent layer between the upper web and the lower web;

wherein the upper and lower webs each extend outward of the absorbent layer, the upper and lower webs being attached to one another around an entire outer perimeter portion of the pad, with the upper and lower webs together surrounding and containing the absorbent layer, and the case-ready package further comprising modified atmosphere or vacuum between the support member and the lid member.

Claims 2-4 (canceled).

Claim 5 (previously presented): The case-ready package according to Claim 1, wherein the modified atmosphere comprises oxygen in an amount of from 60 to 80 percent, based on total atmospheric weight within the package.

Claim 6 (previously presented): The case-ready package according to Claim 1, wherein the modified atmosphere comprises atmospheric oxygen in an amount less than 5% by volume.

Claim 7 (original): The case-ready package according to Claim 1, wherein atmosphere has been substantially evacuated from within the package.

Claim 8 (original): The case-ready package according to Claim 1, wherein the upper web of the absorbent pad comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of olefin homopolymer, olefin copolymer, polyester, and polyamide.

Claim 9 (original): The case-ready package according to Claim 8, wherein the upper web of the absorbent pad comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of ethylene homopolymer, propylene homopolymer, ethylene copolymer, propylene copolymer, polyester, and polyamide.

Claim 10 (original): The case-ready package according to Claim 1, wherein the upper web of the absorbent pad is water-impermeable.

Claim 11 (canceled)

Claim 12 (currently amended): The case-ready package according to ~~Claim 11~~ Claim 1, wherein the nonwoven fibers comprise at least one member selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, polyester, and polyamide.

Claim 13 (original): The case-ready package according to Claim 1, wherein the absorbent layer comprises a layer of wood fluff and a layer of tissue paper.

Claim 14 (original): The case-ready package according to Claim 1, wherein the absorbent layer further comprises superabsorbent.

Claim 15 (previously presented): The case-ready package according to Claim 14, wherein at least some of the superabsorbent is present in granular form.

Claim 16 (original): The case-ready package according to Claim 1, wherein the upper and lower webs are attached with a heat seal.

Claim 17 (original): The case-ready package according to Claim 1, wherein the upper and lower webs are attached with an adhesive.

Claim 18 (original): The case-ready package according to Claim 1 wherein the support member comprises foam.

Claim 19 (previously presented): The case-ready package according to Claim 1, wherein the hydrophilic composition comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of polysorbate, ethoxylated linear alcohol, fatty amine oxide, alkanolamide, and block copolymers of ethylene oxide or propylene oxide with dimethylsiloxane that are coupled to polar groups containing a hydrophilic moiety.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The case-ready package according to Claim 19, wherein the hydrophilic composition is present on the second web in an amount of from about 0.1 to 10 weight percent, based on the weight of the lower web.

Claim 21 (previously presented): A packaged product comprising a food product which exudes juice in a case-ready package comprising:

(A) a support member;

(B) a lid member comprising a flexible film; and

(C) an absorbent pad comprising:

(i) an upper web comprising a flexible film;

(ii) a liquid-permeable lower web comprising nonwoven fiber having a hydrophilic composition thereon, the nonwoven fiber comprising at least one member selected from the group consisting of polyolefin, polyamide, and polyester; and

(iii) an absorbent layer between the upper web and the lower web;

wherein the upper and lower webs each extend outward of the absorbent layer, the upper and lower webs being attached to one another around an entire outer perimeter portion of the pad, with the upper and lower webs together surrounding and containing the absorbent layer, and the case-ready package further comprising modified atmosphere or vacuum between the support member and the lid member.

Claim 22 (original): The packaged product according to Claim 21, wherein the food product comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of meat, poultry, cheese, and produce.

Claim 23 (previously presented): A process for making a case-ready package for containing a food product which exudes juice, comprising:

(A) placing a product to be packaged on a support member having a base;

(B) placing an absorbent pad on the support member, the absorbent pad comprising:

(i) an upper web comprising a flexible film;

(ii) a liquid-permeable lower web comprising nonwoven fiber having a hydrophilic composition thereon, the nonwoven fiber comprising at least one member selected from the group consisting of polyolefin, polyamide, and polyester; and

(iii) an absorbent layer between the upper web and the lower web;

wherein the upper and lower webs each extend outward of the absorbent layer, the upper and lower webs being attached to one another around an entire outer perimeter portion of the pad, with the upper and lower webs together surrounding and containing the absorbent layer, and the case-ready package further comprising modified atmosphere or vacuum between the support member and the lid member;

(C) evacuating atmosphere from around the product and support member;

(D) placing a lid member over the product and the support member so that the product is surrounded by the lid and the support member.

Claim 24 (original): The process according to Claim 23, further comprising surrounding the product and support member with a modified atmosphere after evacuation of the atmosphere bit before placing the lid member over the product and support member.